

SUNDAY, AUGUST 3, 2014

Vol. 94, No. 150 © 2014 • Since 1922

# The Baytown Sun

Covering East Harris County, Chambers County and Southwest Liberty County

www.baytownsun.com

\$1.50

## 'Quick and quiet and gone'

BY MARK FLEMING  
mark.fleming@baytownsun.com

### Board member speaks out on Goose Creek's way forward

With just three weeks before students return to class in Goose Creek CISD schools, at least one board member believes the only way forward for the district is under a new superintendent.

Blackford said he believes some good things have been accomplished in the two years Dr. Salvador Cavazos has been superintendent, but that a new leader is needed.

"In every single email, every phone call, every single person that stops me at

Kroger, it's the same complaint. It's the superintendent and his management style and his apparent inability have the kind of interpersonal skills to truly communicate with his staff."

"I've not heard one single complaint over any of the academic processes we've put in place, over any of the training that we've given teachers – the principal academy, Kagan



BLACKFORD

[professional development] training, curriculum instruction – not one. Not one single complaint to do academically."

Blackford said that admittedly he was not in the room when any of the alleged negative encounters occurred between the superintendent and staff, "but when you hear every person saying the same thing, that's cause for alarm. Now it's

time to take action."

"All ego aside, it comes down to one question: does the superintendent have the ability to effectively lead the district in light of everything – in light of all the complaints, in light of all the emails and phone calls. Is it recoverable?"

"The answer is No," Blackford said. "In my opinion, no, it is not recoverable."

SEE GOOSE CREEK • PAGE 7A



Baytown Sun photo by Christopher James

Environmental activist Lois Gibbs joins Texans Together, The San Jacinto River Coalition, Houston Council member Jack Christie and Chief of the Environmental Division at Harris County Attorney's Office Rock Owens to demand full removal of the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund Site.

## Environmental activists seek complete removal of San Jacinto River waste pits

### 'I'm here to support the struggle'

BY CHRISTOPHER JAMES  
christopher.james@baytownsun.com

Environmental activist and Nobel Prize nominee Lois Gibbs joined Texans Together and the San Jacinto River Coalition to demand full removal of the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund Site on Friday.

Additional attendees included Houston City Council member Jack Christie and Chief of the Environmental Division at Harris County Attorney's Office Rock Owens.

Gibbs spoke about her experience

with dioxin and her fight 35 years ago at Love Canal.

"I'm here to support the struggle to do what is really quite obvious. You have a superfund site underwater, you don't need studies to determine that you need to dig it up and take it out," Gibbs said. "The things that I'm hearing being told to the residents who live in this area and people concerned about these pits are the same things they said to us 35 years ago – things like dioxin doesn't move. Ladies and

SEE STRUGGLE • PAGE 7A

### At Lee College workshop, mayor calls toxic removal a 'no-brainer'

BY CHRISTOPHER JAMES  
christopher.james@baytownsun.com

Environmental activist Lois Gibbs and the Director of the San Jacinto River Coalition Jacquelyn Young led a community workshop calling for the removal of toxic waste in the San Jacinto River waste pits Saturday at Lee College.

Baytown Mayor Stephen DonCarlos introduced Gibbs as well as gave his support for full removal of the pits.

"We at the city are extremely concerned about the presence of this pit," DonCarlos said. "I personally believe that it is a no-brainer that this site needs to be completely remediated."

Once Gibbs took the floor, she applauded the mayor for his support and told her story about becoming an accidental environmentalist.

In the spring of 1978, a 27-year-old Gibbs discovered

SEE WORKSHOP • PAGE 7A

## BPD: Killer turns self in

BY ELESKA AUBESPIN  
eleska.aubesp@baytownsun.com

Baytown Police said Walter Pickering, 25, who is suspected of killing 32-year-old Glen Flowers, turned himself in to authorities Friday night.

He was arrested and booked into the city jail.

Flowers suffered one gunshot wound and was pronounced dead when Baytown Police EMS arrived at the Valero, 1601 N. Alexander Drive, at 12:12 a.m. Friday.

Police initially believed that the Baytown resident was a bystander who was randomly shot during the incident. Baytown police confirmed that the two men knew each other.

"The men were acquaintances," said Baytown Police Spokesman Lt. Eric Freed.

Several witnesses told police officers that a man shot Flowers and immediately drove off in a gray Chevy pickup truck. Witnesses were also able to give police the license plate number of the truck, which was registered to Pickering.

"One witness memorized his fleeing truck's license plate which is registered to him and several witnesses picked him out of a photo array," said Freed.

Detectives interviewed several witnesses who said Pickering and a Hispanic fe-

SEE KILLER • PAGE 7A

## Chambers County Sheriff's Office looking into missing funds

BY MARK FLEMING  
mark.fleming@baytownsun.com

The Chambers County Sheriff's Office is investigating the alleged theft of several thousand dollars from the county's Environmental Health and Permitting Department.

"There is a criminal investigation going on in regard to some missing funds," Sheriff Brian Hawthorne said. "It was discovered

by the auditor's office ... and there's been an investigation going on now for a few weeks based on information that was given to us from the auditor's office."

Hawthorne said, "There are multiple possible suspects." He said no individual had yet been singled out. Several people have been interviewed, Hawthorne said.

"Right now the Chambers County Sheriff's Office is conducting the investigation," he said. "The auditor's office is be-

ing briefed regularly on it."

Hawthorne said the investigation was not yet to the point of being able to make an arrest or take the matter to the grand jury.

County Judge Jimmy Sylvia said he was limited in what he could say about the situation since it involved both a criminal investigation and personnel matters, but he confirmed that Sidney L. Lewis Jr. was terminated Friday from his position

as director of the Environmental Health and Permitting Department.

Sylvia said the termination did not indicate that Lewis was involved with the missing money. "The reasons he was terminated [were] mismanagement of his department and misuse of county equipment," Sylvia said.

While a new director for that department is being sought, he said, Rex Tunze is serving as interim director.

### WHAT'S INSIDE

Classified ..... 7-8B  
Obituaries ..... 6A  
Sports ..... 5A  
Crossword ..... 6B  
Community ..... 2A  
Weather ..... 2A  
Stocks ..... 5A  
Viewpoints ..... 4A

Join our Facebook Page

Scan the QR code to read online



### WEATHER

Some showers  
High 90  
Low 72

### CONTACT US

Main office ..... 281-422-8302  
Classified advertising ..... 281-425-8008  
Retail advertising ..... 281-425-8036  
Newsroom ..... 281-425-8028  
Circulation ..... 281-425-8066



# Some GCCISD board members - on the record

BY MARK FLEMING

mark.fleming@baytownsun.com

After the Monday Goose Creek CISD School Board meeting, The Baytown Sun invited school board members and Superintendent Dr. Salvador Cavazos to provide any response they wanted and to share anything they would like to say to ensure the community that the district is on the right track moving forward.

Since board member Ken Martin had previously shared his thoughts with the community through a one-on-one interview with The Sun, that opportunity was also

offered to the other board members and Dr. Cavazos.

Jenice Coffey declined. Daniel Blackford accepted the offer of an interview (see separate story). Martin and Vicky Melo provided statements (below), and Jimmy Smith responded to similar questions earlier in the week.

## Vicky Melo:

I understand people are upset that I voted against extending citizens' participation at Monday's meeting, however, I felt after two months of emails, phone calls, letters in the newspaper and the extended citizens' participation at the July 14th meeting that I had a clear pic-

ture of the public's concerns. Based on the future agenda items requested it should be clear to the public that their concerns have been heard and I felt that staying within our usual time allocated for citizens' participation would allow us to move forward with the work that needs to be done. Listening does not provide resolution; action does.

## Ken Martin:

I clearly understand the concerns that the citizens have raised and am committed to working to move our district forward in a way that provides the best outcome for our students, our staff, and our community.

## GCCISD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

He said administrators have told him "Dan, we feel like we're walking on eggshells, and if we crunch too loud the ax is going to fall on us."

Blackford said now trustees have to deal with the legal processes of moving to a new superintendent.

"We don't want to drag the district into a prolonged legal battle that's going to be costly for the district and simply serve as a distraction in light of everything else that's going on."

"There's several ways that this can be dealt with. The superintendent can

choose to seek employment elsewhere and leave on his own. We can consider a buyout option of the contract, or we can move to terminate the contract, which in turn drags us into that legal battle."

"I've heard the people. I've heard what my constituents say. I've heard what every speaker that gets up there has to say, and what the people want is quick and quiet and gone. That's what the people demand."

Looking ahead to the future, Blackford said that during the last superintendent search it was clear that every candidate who made it to a final interview had done homework about the district and was familiar with it.

"I fear that in light of

everything going on - if I were a superintendent seeking a job, I'm going to have to look at Goose Creek real hard and go, 'Do I want to jump into this firestorm?'"

"There's a lot of stuff that's going to need to be fixed. There's going to have to be a serious, serious ground game done on restoring faith with the community and the community leaders, the teachers, the administrative staff," he said.

"We don't want somebody to come in that's just going to glad-hand everybody and pat them on the back. We all have the same goal in mind. We want Goose Creek to be a great district. It can be such a great district."

"In my opinion, we're never going to achieve greatness unless we have the community buy-in. If our community isn't on board with it, if the teachers aren't on board with it, if the parents aren't on board with it, we're never going to achieve greatness."

Blackford acknowledged the board has also made mistakes. "Perhaps I haven't been as diligent as I could be in communicating with the public ... it's our job to communicate with them."

"In the winning of hearts and minds, we have failed. We have failed miserably," Blackford said.

He said the district has made some accomplishments over the last two

years, including getting bond election passed, training for teachers, bringing in an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and directors for each of the three high school feeder patterns.

Coming challenges include realigning attendance zones for the high schools, building an additional junior high, closing achievement gaps between different groups of students and keeping up with ever-rising state achievement standards.

Blackford was one of three trustees who voted at the Monday night meeting who voted to allow more time for citizen participation.

Four trustees voted against the motion, though,

so only six people were allowed to speak in accordance with usual board policy.

"Even though the likelihood was they were all saying the same thing - we know that, we get that, but that's not the point - they took time out of their lives to come up there and make their voice heard, then we should listen," he said.

"There's a couple of them that have spoken that really get down on a personal attack level, and I think that's a little uncalled for."

"It really, really disappointed me that someone would drag my family into this," Blackford said. "My daughter and wife ... have had nothing to do with the school board."

## WORKSHOP

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

that her child was attending an elementary school built next to a 20,000 ton, toxic dump in Niagara Falls, New York.

"When I moved in to my house with my healthy child, there was absolutely nothing wrong with that child," Gibbs said. "After living there for five years, he developed asthma, epilepsy, a urinary tract disorder, a liver problem and a depressed immune system. I couldn't figure out what was going on, much like many of you. No one told me that the dump was three blocks away from my house."

Once she found out about the toxic dumpsite, she rallied her neighbors and created the Love Canal Homeowners Association to oppose local, state and federal government officials, who said that the leaking toxic chemicals were not the cause of the health

problems.

After two years of organized opposition to the claims of the government, President Jimmy Carter issued an Emergency Declaration, which moved 833 families from the area in October 1980.

Her point to the citizens at the workshop was that facts are not enough to get the attention of the responsible parties, but constant pressure and "out of the box" thinking can get results.

"You need to organize, you need to use the science, you need to use your legal handles, and you need to figure out who are the decision makers and how do you make the decision makers do what you want them to do."

Gibbs said: "Don't play by the rules, the rules are established for the sole purpose of controlling the conversation, controlling the debate and controlling the people. If you work outside of the rules and do things that are not violent, progress can be gained."

After Gibbs spoke, Young began to explain the problems that citizen's face locally.

Young addressed the history of the San Jacinto waste pits, which are located north of Interstate 10 and were constructed in the mid-60's by Champion Paper and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance, who filled the ponds with waste paper sludge from a local paper mill until 1968, when they were abandon.

She explained that among the waste are some of the worst pollutants possible: lead, mercury, PCB's and dioxin.

Young continued to address the cap that is currently over that pits that was put in place in 2011 by Waste Management and International Paper.

"The responsible parties, Waste Management and International Paper, claim that their cap is going to work," Young said. "Even though it has already been proven to be problematic and has never been proven effective, es-

pecially in a river."

Waste management and International Paper would prefer, instead of full removal of the site, to enhance the current armored cap not only for cost, but also for the risks associated with removing the material.

According to the EPA website, the cap enhancement would cost an estimated \$2.9 million and about two months to complete.

Young then asked for the help of the community and told them what they could do to help get the pits completely removed.

"You can talk to your family, you can talk to your neighbors. The more people that are educated and aware of these issues, the better our chances are of getting the source removed," Young said.

"We have petitions of support in the lobby, which we use to hand over to people like Gina McCarthy and Ron Curry of the EPA."

Young offered attendees the

opportunity to volunteer and encouraged any type of participation in the fight for removal.

She informed them that The San Jacinto River Coalition would be at a workshop with the administrator of the EPA Gina McCarthy next week.

"Gina is coming here for a EPA region 6 environmental justice workshop, which will be next Friday," Young said.

"And we have requested that they come out and tour the waste pits because when you actually see it people realize that this is not a place for toxic chemicals."

During the three-day workshop next week with the EPA, Young will give them a tour of the site, which they agreed upon.

The EPA will conduct an Environmental Justice Training Workshop from Aug. 6-8 at the Houston Marriott, 9100 Gulf Freeway.

The workshop is free, but space is limited. Individuals can register at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).

## U.S. doctor with Ebola in Atlanta for treatment

ATLANTA (AP) — The first person infected with Ebola to be brought to the United States from Africa was safely escorted into a specialized isolation unit Saturday at one of the na-

tion's best hospitals, where doctors said they are confident the deadly virus won't escape.

Fear that the outbreak killing more than 700 people in Africa could spread

in the U.S. has generated considerable anxiety. But infectious disease experts said the public faces little risk as Emory University Hospital treats the critically ill missionary doctor and his assistant, who is expected to arrive from Liberia in several days.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

has received "nasty emails" and at least 100 calls from people saying "How dare you bring Ebola into the country?" CDC Director Tom Friedman said.

"I hope that our understandable fear of the unfamiliar does not trump our compassion when ill Americans return to the U.S. for care," Frieden said.

## KILLER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

Pickering and a Hispanic female were arguing while at the gas pumps.

Pickering then turned toward Flowers, cursed at him, shot him and drove off in a 2007 silver Chevy pickup truck.

Baytown police detectives were asking the public for any assistance in locating Pickering before while he was still at large.

They released Valero video surveillance footage that shows Pickering shortly before and after the shooting. Because of a camera glitch, the actual shooting was not captured on video.

On the footage, Pickering is wearing a white "wife beater" type shirt, black shorts and is seen leaving in the silver Chevy truck. That footage can be seen at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWnOGgx-nEu0&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWnOGgx-nEu0&feature=youtu.be).

## STRUGGLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

gentlemen, it moves, in fact it moved from the center of our toxic waste site to the end of the designated evacuation area."

Currently, the San Jacinto Waste Pits are partially contained under a temporary cap near the western bank of the San Jacinto River, immediately north of the Interstate 10 bridge.

The pits were created in the mid-60's by Champion Paper and McGinnes Industrial Maintenance, who filled the ponds with waste paper sludge from a local paper mill until 1968, when they were abandon.

Waste management and International Paper would prefer to enhance the current armored cap not only for cost, but also for the risks associated with removing the material.

The Environmental Protection Agency has proposed six possible cleanup solutions ranging from no further action to full removal of the pits and chemical cleanup.

Constructed in 1964, the San Jacinto River Waste Pits are filled with paper bleaching waste from a paper plant in Pasadena. Among the waste in the pits are lead, mercury, PCB's and dioxin.

Dioxins are of concern because of their highly toxic, cancer-causing potential and because once they enter the body, they accumulate in fatty tis-

sues and stay in place.

They do not break down quickly or dissolve for removal from the body and have been found in species of fish and shellfish.

"Dioxin is one of the most toxic chemicals known to man," Gibbs said. "And it's so toxic that it goes from generation to generation. Removing the waste now isn't going to help people that have already been exposed, it will be passed on from generation to generation."

Because of the change in the rivers path and subsidence in the soil the pits began leaking, contaminating the river and the fish that swim in it, which led to a fishing advisory in 1990 that remains in place to this day.

Recently the EPA announced that because of the complexity of the Superfund site that additional information is needed prior to a recommendation of a cleanup alternative.

The EPA plans to undertake an independent review of site modeling and potential river/weather conditions that might influence the solution.

"The EPA has taken a huge step recently and they have decided to bring in a third party," Director of the San Jacinto River Coalition, Jacquelyn Young said. "We hope that this step will lead them to successfully protecting human health and the environment from a future catastrophe."

**832-984-0180**

Diana Cheek, Owner

25 years experience

For the cleanest home in town, call:

**Honey's Cleaning Service**

Now accepting a few new homes!

Serving Baytown & Mont Belvieu

Quality early childhood education in a Christian environment.

**ENROLL NOW!**

School begins August 18, 2014

6 months-4 years (Pres-K)

**ABC Explorers Day School**

Low student/teacher ratio

Extended care sessions available

Memorial Baptist Church • 600 W. Sterling • Baytown, Texas 77520

[www.memorialbaytown.com](http://www.memorialbaytown.com) • 281.427.1725, Ext. 223

**Karla Opryshek**

(281) 433-2281 • [kopryshek@cbunited.com](mailto:kopryshek@cbunited.com)

**COLDWELL BANKER**

UNITED, REALTORS®

Third Generation REALTOR®

Broker/Associate

CRS, ABR, ASR, NHS, CNE

4501 North Main, Baytown TX, 77520

(281) 427-8910

